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# CÆSAR RODNEY

1728 - 1784



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PROCEEDINGS

71894

ON

UNVEILING THE MONUMENT

TO

CÆSAR RODNEY,

AND THE

ORATION DELIVERED ON THE OCCASSION

BY

THOMAS F. <sup>ce</sup>BAYARD,

AT

DOVER, DELAWARE,

OCTOBER 30th, 1889.

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WILMINGTON, DEL.:  
DELAWARE PRINTING COMPANY.  
1889.



## THE HISTORY OF THE MONUMENT.

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The home of Cæsar Rodney was at "Poplar Grove," St. Jones' Neck, Kent county, Delaware, where he died on the 29th of June, 1784. His place of interment was on the estate where he spent his days, and was unmarked save by a stone placed there recently by the Hon. Joseph P. Comegys, Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Delaware. In this neglected condition the grave of this distinguished Revolutionary statesman and warrior remained till the year 1887. In November, 1887, an organization was formed of young men of Dover to put a fitting monument over Cæsar Rodney's remains.

The organization thus formed took the name of "The Rodney Club." The officers originally chosen were—

President, WILLIAM G. KERBIN,  
Secretary, HENRY RIDGELY, JR.,  
Treasurer, ROBERT R. P. BRADFORD.

In September, 1889, Henry Ridgely was elected president of the "Club," *vice* William G. Kerbin, who had removed to New York ; and W. Lee Cannon was elected secretary.

The movement at once received generous public support and universal commendation. The "Rodney Club" brought the matter to the attention of the Delaware Legislature, and the following joint resolution was passed at Dover, February 20th, 1889:—

WHEREAS, It is right and proper that patriots should be especially honored, and the remembrance of their good deeds preserved for the encouragement of patriotism in future generations ; and as other States have taken measures to honor their patriotic sires, Delaware should not be derelict in her duty to those who in perilous times pledged their fortunes and their sacred honor, to gain and secure for us peace, happiness and prosperity, unexampled in the history of nations; and

WHEREAS, There is no fitter mode of expressing her appreciation

of their patriotism and of immortalizing their noble deeds that of erecting monuments to their memory; and

WHEREAS, The remains of General Cæsar Rodney, member of the Continental Congress, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, one of the presidents of the Delaware State during the war for independence, an eminent, self-denying patriot, a sturdy advocate of American rights and liberties, lie in the Episcopal burying-ground, at Dover, without any stone to mark their resting place; therefore

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware in General Assembly met:*

That, J. M. C. Rodney, Esq., John R. Nicholson, Esq., McKendree Downham, and the "Rodney Club" consisting of Henry Ridgely, Jr., Robert R. P. Bradford, William G. Kerbin, George L. Whitaker, Peter L. Cooper, Jr., James H. Hughes, William Saulsbury, W. L. Cannon, Jr., R. H. Vandyke, and Nelson Spencer, and such others as they shall hereafter associate with them, are hereby appointed a committee to have a suitable monument, with appropriate inscriptions and devices, erected over the remains of General Cæsar Rodney in the aforesaid burying-ground.

*Resolved,* That the committee appointed by the foregoing resolution, or a majority of them, are hereby authorized to draw their order or orders on the State Treasurer for any sum or sums not exceeding in the whole the sum of five hundred dollars, for the purpose of carrying into effect the object of the resolutions aforesaid, and the State Treasurer be and he is hereby authorized and directed to pay the order or orders of the said committee so drawn on him, out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated; and it shall be the duty of the said committee, or a majority of them, to make report of their proceedings to the next biennial session of the Legislature, setting forth the expenditures consequent upon the execution of their duties under the provisions of these resolutions.

Anterior to the passage of the above resolution, the "Rodney Club" had removed the remains of Cæsar Rodney from the old homestead in St. Jones' Neck and had them deposited in the above mentioned Episcopal Cemetery in Dover.

In addition to the five hundred dollars thus secured from the State a like amount was given to the monument fund by the will of the late Mrs. Sally Morris, of Wilmington, Delaware, a daughter of his nephew Cæsar A. Rodney, and it was deemed advisable at once to proceed with the erection of the monument.

Wednesday, October 30, 1889, was fixed as the day of unveiling, and the HON. THOMAS F. BAYARD was chosen the orator.

## OPENING CEREMONIES.

Henry Ridgely, Jr., President of the "Rodney Club," introduced Governor B. T. Biggs, who said :—

"By virtue of my office as successor to Cæsar Rodney in the executive office of the State, I have been invited by the "Rodney Club" to preside on this august occasion, and it now gives me pleasure to present to you the Rt. Rev. Leighton Coleman, Bishop of Delaware."

## PRAYER BY BISHOP COLEMAN.

O Almighty and most merciful God, we, thy unworthy servants, pray Thee to be especially present with us at this time and bless the ceremonies in which we are engaged. We praise and magnify Thy holy name as for all Thy goodness toward us, so particularly for the blessings of civil and religious liberty which thou hast vouchsafed this nation, and for the labors of those among our forefathers whom Thou didst inspire and direct in laying the perpetual foundations of freedom, peace and prosperity. And herein we chiefly thank Thee for the good example and efficient services in this glorious work of him in whose honored memory we have set up this monument. We humbly beseech Thee that the devout sense of Thy gracious providence in our behalf may renew and increase in us a spirit of love and loyalty to Thee, a spirit of peaceable submission to the laws and government of our common country, and a fervent zeal for our holy religion which Thou hast preserved and secured to us and our posterity.

May we improve these inestimable blessings for the advancement of true knowledge and godliness, and show ourselves a people ever mindful of Thy favour and ready to do Thy will. Bless the President of the United States, the Governor of this State, the Judiciary, and the Legislature, and endue them with constant wisdom and fidelity.

Grant to our land, and especially to our own commonwealth of Delaware, honorable industry, sound learning and pure manners. Defend our liberties and preserve our unity. Save us from violence, discord and confusion, from ignorance, pride and prejudice. Purge us of corruption, intemperance and covetousness, and deliver us from every evil way. Fashion into one happy people, fearing God and working righteousness, the multitudes who come hither out of many kindreds and tongues. In the time of prosperity fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble suffer not our Trust in Thee to fail. All which we ask in the name and for the sake of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who taught us when we pray to say

Amen

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation ; But deliver us from evil : For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Governor Biggs then introduced Mr. Bayard and said :—  
 “Having been selected to preside over this highly cultured and intelligent audience, I would be remiss in duty did I not return my sincere thanks to the Rodney Club for so high an honor, so distinguished a compliment. The State of Delaware, though one of the smallest in the Union, has always been represented in the councils of the nation by men of intelligence equal to any other State.

“We have met here to-day to unveil a monument to one of the great men of the revolution, who was born in Dover about the year 1730. Any one familiar with the life of Cæsar Rodney cannot but believe that as a patriot he loved liberty, he fought for independence; and no man, living or dead, on the earth or under the earth, was his superior in every virtue which adorns and beautifies the human character. [Applause.]

“I will not longer trespass upon your patience. It is my privilege and pleasure to introduce to you a gentleman known to you all, one who has given twenty years of his life to the public service, four of which have been as Secretary of State of the United States. One hundred years ago, from the 30th of April last, his great-grandfather, Richard Basset, one of the signers of the Constitution, was elected a United States Senator from this State, and took the oath of office in the city of New York.

“The pure name and white fame of the Hon. Thomas F. Bayard is not confined to the North American continent, but has leaped over the two mighty oceans which wash our shores and is known all over Europe. It now gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the Hon. Thomas F. Bayard, who will now address you.” [Great applause.]

FELLOW CITIZENS OF DELAWARE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,  
GENTLEMEN OF THE RODNEY CLUB :

It would appear that William Penn had been of like mind with my Lord Bacon, who held it to be "a shameful and unblessed thing to take the scum of people, and wicked, condemned men to be the people with whom you plant," and therefore when Penn came to let in the sunlight of liberty of the person in conscience and in conduct upon the colony he was planting on these shores, he sought as his companions and assistants men of character and substance ; and he brought out of England men of good stock and standing and excluded "the scum and wicked, condemned men."

Among those who in the same year, but not in the same good ship, the "Welcome," that bore Penn and his shipmates up the Delaware bay and river in 1682, came William Rodney, of Bristol, who soon thereafter became a landholder in St. Jones, as it was then called, but since Nov. 25, 1682, has been the county of Kent, retaining the same boundaries.

William Rodney was the American progenitor of the family of that name, and his posterity have continued to dwell within the Delaware State, as valued and estimable citizens, contributing important service to the commonwealth. He was of an honorable and distinguished English ancestry and traced his descent from Sir Walter de Rodeney, who came from Normandy in A. D. 1139, in the suite of the Empress Maude, daughter of Henry I and wife of Geoffrey Plantagenet, Earl of Anjou. Sir Walter served in the war against Stephen, by which the succession to the crown of England was secured to Henry II.

In the subsequent history of England, the Rodneys proved themselves a valiant and honorable race, and these qualities of manhood were transmitted from generation unto generation, and in a marked degree to the American patriot in honor of whose memory we meet to-day, to raise an enduring monument to him for the conspicuous part he played in the great contest to assert on this side the Atlantic the same principles of civil liberty which his ances-



tors had fought for and gained in England. For it was the same spirit of courageous manhood that breathes in the great charter of English liberty which proclaimed itself nearly six centuries later in the American Declaration of Independence, and to the same political training and same stock of race and blood is mainly due the steadfast courage and persistent moral energy that lent vital force to these ideals, gave them power, and imbedded them in the constitutions of their governments on both sides of the Atlantic ocean.

When Washington, on April 18, 1783, issued from the headquarters at Newburgh on the Hudson, the order to the American armies upon the cessation of hostilities, with a prescient comprehension of the magnitude of the results that were to flow to the world at large from the victory God had vouchsafed to his country, he embodied a recommendation which to-day we should reverently follow, and which I will read to you in his own words:

"I cannot help wishing that all the brave men of whatever condition they may be, who have shared in the toils and dangers of effecting this glorious revolution of rescuing millions from the hand of oppression and of laying the foundation of a great empire, might be impressed with a proper idea of the dignified part they have been called to act (under the smiles of Providence) on the stage of human affairs; for happy, thrice happy, shall they be pronounced hereafter, who have contributed anything, who have performed the meanest office in erecting this stupendous *fabric of freedom and enterprise* on the broad basis of independence, who have assisted in protecting the rights of human nature, and establishing an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions."

The words of Washington are ever to be read with reverence by his countrymen, for in them breathed the very soul of the revolution that made it possible for the inhabitants of this continent to become the masters of their own political destiny,

and in our contemplation of the great fabric and superstructure of empire, wealth, power, and all the forces of a progressive civilization which has been reared upon their work, let us be ever mindful that the foundations were laid in the solid personal virtues, the conscientious fidelity to duty, to Almighty God and their country, of a scanty handful of plain men around the tomb of one of whom we gather to-day in grateful remembrance.

Soon after the arrival of William Rodney in the province of Pennsylvania, he settled in St. Jones, now Kent county, and in the annals of the period we find his name connected with the local government. He took part in the separate organization of the government of the three lower counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex, on the Delaware, then commonly styled "the territories," in contradistinction from the three "upper" counties, Philadelphia, Bucks and Chester, known, and called by William Penn the "province." We find Mr. Rodney's name in the memorial of the representative freeholders in the year 1700, when they endeavored unavailingly, but as it eventuated, fortunately, to re-establish a Legislative union with the province, under the liberal charter of Penn as it had existed under the settlement of February 1682; and when the three lower counties had organized a separate assembly for their own government in 1701, William Rodney was chosen Speaker of the Assembly.

His father, whose name also was William, had married Alice the daughter of Sir Thomas Cæsar, an eminent merchant of the city of London, and his son William died near Dover, Del., in the year 1708, leaving eight children and a considerable landed estate which was entailed, and by the decease of elder sons, finally vested in his youngest son, Cæsar, who continued his residence as a landed proprietor in Delaware until his death in 1745. The Christian name of Cæsar, the son of William Rodney, was derived from his great-grandfather, Sir Thomas Cæsar.

Cæsar Rodney, the eldest son of Cæsar and grandson of William Rodney, was born in St. Jones' Neck, near Dover,

in Kent county, Delaware, in the year 1728, and died at his residence, at Poplar Grove, in the same neighborhood, on the 26th of June, 1784, in the 57th year of his age. Left an orphan at the age of seventeen, he selected Nicholas Ridgely, Esquire, to be his guardian at an Orphans' Court held in Dover on February 27, 1745. This early step had a most fortunate influence upon his moral and intellectual training, for he was brought into the family and under the influence of an intelligent, honorable and upright man who wisely nursed his estate, carefully supervised his education and took an affectionate interest in his welfare.

Mr. Ridgely caused his ward to be instructed in the classics and general literature and in the accomplishments of fencing and dancing, to fit his bearing and manners becomingly to the station in life in which he was born.

Amid such domestic influences of morality, cultivation and refinement the youth of Cæsar Rodney was passed, and the effect of these advantages was made apparent in his career in life. His correspondence is that of an educated man, his chirography, of which I have seen several specimens, was clear and well-formed, with excellent power of expressing his sentiments. His personal disposition was extremely vivacious; of an active and vigorous nature he carried with him into whatever society he entered an influence at once engaging, attractive and impressive. His courage never faltered or failed, even "in the times that tried men's souls" and in its overflow was contagious among feebler spirits.

From his early manhood he attracted the respect and confidence of his fellow citizens, and civil distinction commenced upon his attaining legal capacity and continued throughout his life. He served in the legislative assembly of the State prior to the stamp act of Congress in 1765, when his usefulness was extended to a wider field. At the age of thirty he was chosen High Sheriff of Kent county, and upon the expiration of his term was made a Justice of the Peace and Judge of the Lower Courts. In 1762 he was selected by the Assembly to revise

and print the laws in conjunction with Thomas McKean, an important duty which was satisfactorily performed.

This may be regarded as his educational period preparatory to his chief work, and the real extent of his abilities and the true features wherein he excelled, were soon exhibited by his selection in association with Thomas McKean, as "Representative of the Freemen of the three lower counties on the Delaware to the convention proposed by the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, to all the other colonies to be held at New York on the first Tuesday in October, 1765," to consult together on the present circumstances of the colonies and the difficulties to which they must be reduced by the operation of the acts of Parliament in levying duties and taxes in the colonies, and to consider of a general, united, dutiful, loyal and humble representation of their condition to his Majesty and to the Parliament and to implore relief.

To comprehend the extent and nature of the services rendered by Cæsar Rodney and his compatriots, and the personal qualities they brought to the aid of the cause of popular self-government, it is necessary to glance at the condition of affairs.

Nowhere in the dominion of Great Britain was the sentiment of loyalty to the sovereign and fidelity to the Imperial government more thoroughly and sincerely evinced than in the American Colonies. Not only had these vigorous emigrants conquered for themselves homes in a wilderness and by their sharp axes, wielded with sinewy arms, let in the light of civilization to forests almost impenetrable, but when the counter currents of French and English ambition striving for control, had been transferred to this continent, the Americans, although left to shift for themselves against Indian assaults, and wholly neglected by the "Mother Country," as it was fondly styled, levied at their own cost armed forces to uphold British dominion in America and repel the military aggressions of France in her efforts to gain cis-Atlantic supremacy. When Benjamin Franklin, then in London as the agent of the colony of Pennsylvania, in February

1766, was examined before the House of Commons touching the wishes and feelings of the colonies in respect of the "Stamp act," he was asked: "Do you think it right that America should be protected by this country and pay no part of the expense." He replied: "That is not the case. The colonies raised, clothed and paid during the last year nearly 25,000 men and spent many millions." And he further testified in relation to the Indian and French wars: "I know that the last war is commonly spoken of here as entered into for the defence, or for the sake of the people of America. I think it is quite misunderstood. It began about the limits between Canada and Nova Scotia, about territories to which *the Crown* indeed laid claim, but which were not claimed by any *colony*, none of the lands had been granted to any colony and therefore we had no particular concern or interest in that dispute."

He might also have recalled the signal victory at Lewisburg achieved by a force composed chiefly of New England fishermen by which "the key of the St. Lawrence, the bulwark of the French fisheries and of French commerce in North America," as it is well styled by the historian Bancroft, passed under British control.

The Stamp Act had passed the House of Commons on March 22, 1765, by a vote of five to one, and in the House of Lords without even a division, and it was repealed in the month of March following, in consequence of the arguments presented and, still more, the manifestation of deep and determined feeling by the colonies against it. But the *principle* against which the colonies protested was not abandoned by the government by the repeal of this single act. Up to 1763 taxes had been laid by Parliament on the colonies, but not for revenue to the home government, but solely for local expenses and as regulations of trade.

But it was the passage of a resolution in 1764 by the British Parliament, after full debate, that it was their right to tax the colonies at will, and recommending under the power so asserted the laying of a stamp tax upon all writs and legal process and mercantile documents, that led to the

solemn protest by the colonies addressed to the Crown, and their counter assertion that "taxes could not be levied upon the people but by their consent in person or by deputation."

Thus, although the Stamp Act was repealed, the principle under which the tax had been imposed, and the claim of power it contained, was still insisted upon with a blindness and infatuation which nothing but the long abuse of power could account for.

Collisions between the officials who represented such claims of authority and the people who resisted became inevitable and frequent, until a sentiment of discontent gradually permeated the minds of the Americans and was not confined to the individuals or the localities that were the objects and scenes of injustice, but a common cause was created throughout the length and breadth of the colonies, to which adhesion grew gradually, but with a grave determination, so that the injury to any one was felt to be the injury of all.

These three lower counties on the Delaware were not governed under a Royal Charter as was Massachusetts and most of the other colonies, but our forefathers were living in happiness and safety under the benignant, wise and generous charter of William Penn, the Proprietary. They were apparently in the secure enjoyment of all and more than their progenitors had left Europe to secure. The promise of William Penn, written from London in April 1681, was indeed generous, but it had been more than fulfilled. He had written: "You shall be governed by laws of your own making, and live a free, and if you will, a sober and industrious people. I shall not usurp the right of any or oppress his person. God has furnished me with a better resolution and has given me grace to keep it. In short, whatever sober and free men can reasonably desire for the security and improvement of their own happiness I shall heartily comply with."

How well and faithfully he kept this promise let his subsequent charters of privileges to the inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania and the "Territories," the three

lower counties, attest. Not only was every birthright of free-born Englishmen amply approved and secured, but a freedom from the rule of classes and privileged orders was granted, to which English subjects elsewhere were strangers; local self-government in all its particulars and essentials was the wise basis, and anticipating those golden words placed by the hand of Jefferson nearly a century later in the Declaration of American Independence—Penn recognized that ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were ‘unalienable rights,’ and to secure *them* governments were established among men ‘deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,’ ” and so, in 1683, when he met the provincial council in which the three lower counties had been united, at their request, with the counties of Philadelphia, Bucks and Chester, each county having an equal representation of nine members, he told them “they might amend, alter or add for the public good,” and that he was ready to settle such foundations as might be for their happiness and the good of their posterity.

It is little to be wondered that the colony so founded in reliance upon all that is best in human nature should flourish and rapidly attract numbers to share its blessings and benefits.

Well might Edmund Burke speak of Penn’s charter to his colonists as “a noble charter of priveleges, by which he made the people more free than any people on earth, and which by securing both civil and religious liberty caused the eyes of the oppressed from all parts of the world to look to his counties for relief. This one act of God-like wisdom and goodness has settled Penn’s counties in a more strong and permanent manner than the wisest regulations could have done on any other plan.” And the growth was rapid, from 3000 of Dutch, Swedes and English when Markham, Penn’s agent, came in 1681, to 4000 when four years afterwards the good Pastorius came to found Germantown, to 12,000 in 1688, when in honest exultation Penn exclaimed: “I have led the greatest colony into America that ever did any man upon a private credit, and the most prosperous beginnings are now

to be found among us." At the time of his death in 1718, the population was supposed to number 40,000. The testimony of the venerable Bancroft may be well cited also: "The old Proprietary Government in an existence of more than ninety years, had now the admiration of the wise throughout the world, by its respect for civil and religious liberty, and had kept itself free from the suspicion of having instigated or approved the obnoxious measures of the British ministers, and had maintained the attitude of mediator between Parliament and America."

Under such a beneficent government Cæsar Rodney had been born and had lived, taking part in the affairs of the community in which there was no manifestation of discontent or a desire for a change of ruler.

The population of these counties at the breaking out of the War of the Revolution was estimated by the Federal Convention of 1783, including negro slaves, at about 35,000, and in all the conferences and conventions at any time called during the colonial period and in the Continental Congress each colony was an equal integer, with an equal vote on all questions. Thus, in the Stamp Act Congress, it was resolved that the committee of each colony shall have one voice only in determining any question that shall arise in the Congress, and in the Articles of Confederation of 1778 of the thirteen States it was provided in Article 5: No State shall be represented in Congress by less than two nor more than seven members. In determining questions in the United States in Congress assembled each State shall have one vote. Similarly, in the convention of 1787, under which a more perfect union was formed under the Federal Constitution, each State had an equal vote in the determination of all questions.

Thus an importance attached to the action and influence of this State disproportionate to the mere number of its inhabitants, but which has operated always for the promotion of the welfare of the Union. The character of the individuals chosen to represent the freemen of Delaware on



sundry important occasions in the history of the formation of our government, and in the stormy period in which our institutions had their birth, has added justly to the influence and reputation of the State in the federal councils; and as the stream cannot rise above its source, I am disposed to attribute the disposition of our citizens to select wise and honorable representatives to the good and substantial material of which the community was composed.

The Dutch, the Swedes and English were men of sturdy integrity and industrious lives. The churches built by them attest their piety to God, and the body of their laws exhibit their respect and appreciation of justice among men.

A sketch of the simple life of our ancestors in Kent county will not be out of place here, and by the kindness of Mrs. Henry Geddes Banning, of Wilmington, I have been allowed to transcribe it from the MSS. of her great-grandfather, Thomas Rodney, himself a brave soldier in the Revolutionary War, and a younger brother of Cæsar Rodney. I give it *verbatim et literatim*.

“The manners and customs of the white people when I first remember, were very simple, plain and social. Very few foreign articles were used in this part of the country for eating, drinking or clothing. Almost every family manufactured their own clothes; and beef, pork, poultry, milk, butter, cheese, wheat, and Indian corn were raised by themselves, served them with fruits of the country, and wild game for food; and cider, small beer, and peach and apple brandy for drink. The best families in the country but seldom used tea, coffee, chocolate or sugar, for honey was their sweetening. The largest farmers at that time did not sow over twenty acres of wheat, nor tend more than thirty acres of Indian corn, and there was very few of this sort, so that all the families in the country had a great deal of idle time, for the land being fertile supplied them plentifully by a little labor, with all that was necessary, nay with great abundance, more than enough, grudged nothing to those who happened to

want. Indeed, they seemed to live as it were in concord ; for they constantly associated together at one house or another in considerable numbers, to play and frolic, at which times the young people would dance, and the elder ones wrestle, run, hop, jump or throw the disc or play at some rustic and manly exercises. On Christmas Eve there was an universal firing of guns, and travelling round from house to house during the holiday, and indeed all winter there was a continual frolic at one house or another, shooting-matches, twelfth-cakes, &c.

“This manner of life continued until the war commenced in 1755, but this occasioned a sudden and universal change in the country. Soldiers were raised, the people formed into militia, great sums of government money were expended, new taxes were laid, and a great variety of civil and military officers became necessary. Produce became more valuable, &c., &c., then in a few years the country became engaged in more pursuits and put on quite a new appearance, yet this operated chiefly on the younger people, and the old habits and customs gradually wore off, until they are at length almost forgot ; for what little remained till then was expelled by the Revolution which had naturally wrought a far greater change than the former war.”

From the simple and happy pastoral life thus pictured by an eye-witness, Cæsar Rodney now emerged and with his colleague, Thomas McKean, took his seat in that convention known as the Stamp Act Congress, which met in New York, in October 1765. I have already read you the objects of that convention which was attended by delegates from nine States, New Hampshire, Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia not being represented but giving their written assent to what was done.

The history of this important congress has never been fully written, and the original records of its proceedings are doubtless to be found among the unpublished archives of the government at Washington, awaiting the day when the un-

blushing importunity of place-hunting and the lofty occupation it begets of office-peddling, shall have been sufficiently intermitted to allow the representatives of the American people time enough to enact measures for the intelligent editing of the documentary history of their government, and its publication for the instruction and edification of their constituents.

Happily for his own conscience, Cæsar Rodney left no personal diary, nor did he attempt any record of his own services or of his daily reflections or criticisms upon his associates and contemporaries, but simply went on doing his duty as conscience dictated, and died leaving an untarnished reputation and no literary sting to discredit those who survived him.

To his care and foresight we owe the procurement and preservation of an authenticated copy of the journal of the Stamp Act Congress, which was found among his papers by his nephew and chief devisee, Cæsar Augustus Rodney, afterwards Attorney-General of the United States in the administration of Thomas Jefferson, and who was United States Minister Plenipotentiary to Buenos Ayres, where he died in June 1824.

This important document was carefully published in Niles' "Weekly Register" in July 1812.

In the prefatory editorial the source of the information is fully set forth, and Mr. Rodney is described as the "estimable and patriotic Cæsar Rodney, one of the delegates and for many years the great prop and stay of Whiggism in the lower parts of his native State."

The MSS. is authenticated by the signature of John Cotton, Esq., the Clerk of the Congress, and was accompanied by a separate paper in the hand-writing of Mr. Rodney containing a list of the members.

The credentials of Rodney and McKean were signed by the individual members of the General Assembly of the three counties, that body not being in session at the time it was necessary to decide upon the question of taking part in the Convention.

The share of Rodney and McKean in this important Congress was conspicuous and influential, and the latter was selected, together with James Otis of Massachusetts, and Thomas Lynch of South Carolina, to prepare a petition to the British House of Commons.

Permit me to draw your attention to the address to the King which was adopted by the Congress—because it indicates the reluctance with which the colonists took any steps which might tend to disintegrate the Empire and establish themselves in independence. I will read the commencement only and conclusion, although the entire document is well worthy of perusal.

*To the King's most excellent Majesty, most humbly sheweth :*

That the inhabitants of these colonies unanimously devoted with the warmest sentiments of duty and affection to your sacred person and government, and inviolably attached to the present happy establishment of the Protestant succession in your illustrious house, and deeply sensible of your royal attention to their prosperity and happiness, humbly beg leave to approach the throne by representing to your majesty that these colonies were originally planted by subjects of the British crown, who, animated by the love of liberty, encouraged by your Majesty's royal predecessors, and confiding in the public faith, for the enjoyment of all the rights and liberties essential to freedom, emigrated from their native country to this continent and by their successful perseverance in the midst of innumerable dangers and difficulties, together with a profusion of their blood and treasure, have happily added these vast and extensive domains to the Empire of Great Britain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then follows a clear and dignified statement of their constitutional rights as British subjects, and the petition concludes :—

“The invaluable right of taxing ourselves and trial by our peers, of which we implore your Majesty's protection,

are not, we must humbly conceive, unconstitutional, but confirmed by the great Charter of English liberty. On the first of these rights the honorable House of Commons founded their practice of originating money—a right enjoyed by the Kingdom of Ireland, by the clergy of England until relinquished by themselves—a right, in fact, which all other of your Majesty's English subjects, both within and without the realm, have hitherto enjoyed.

“With hearts therefore impressed with the most indelible characters of gratitude to your Majesty and to the memory of the Kings of your illustrious house, whose reigns have been signally distinguished by their auspicious influence on the prosperity of the British dominions, and convinced by the most affecting proofs of your Majesty's paternal love to all your people, however distant, and your unceasing and benevolent desires to promote their happiness, we most humbly beseech your Majesty that you will be graciously pleased to take into your royal consideration the distresses of your faithful subjects on this continent, and to lay the same before your Majesty's Parliament and to afford them such relief as in your royal wisdom their unhappy circumstances shall be judged to require.”

\* \* \* \* \*

It would seem impossible for a people to frame a supplication for simple justice and forbearance from useless oppression in more humble and affectionate phrase, and yet strange to say, the “timidity,” as Bancroft calls it, or “conscience” as the President of the Congress, Brigadier Timothy Ruggles of Massachusetts, himself styled it, caused the latter to refuse to sign the papers for transmission.

Thomas McKean, in a letter to John Adams, of August 20, 1815, thus describes the incident :

“When the business was finished our President would not sign the petition and peremptorily refused to assign any reason until I pressed him so, that at last he said ‘it was against his conscience,’ with which word I rung

the changes so loud, that a plain challenge was given by him and accepted in the presence of the whole corps, but he departed the next morning before day without an adieu to any of his brothers. \* \* \* \*

Mr. Robert Ogden, then speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, following the example of the President, declined to sign the petitions, although thereby warmly solicited by myself in private and also by my father-in-law, Colonel Borden, his colleague.

"The consequence of my mentioning this fact, as I returned to New Castle through New Jersey was to Mr. Ogden a burning in effigy in several of the counties, and his removal from the office of Speaker at the next meeting of the Assembly, and to me menaces of another challenge."

Thomas McKean of New Castle, in Delaware, was of Irish parentage on both sides, and even before he had attained his majority became a practicing attorney.

It is impossible to disconnect his life and labors in the public service from that of Cæsar Rodney, so long as the latter lived.

Their association and confidential friendship antedated their joint services in the Stamp Act Congress, and they appear to have supplemented the designs and objects of each other throughout in the most zealous and efficient matter, notable instances of which I shall proceed to relate.

Of the reputation and services of Thomas McKean to the whole country it seems impossible to speak too highly, and he was the only man who, without intermission, served as a member of the Continental Congress from the time of its opening in 1774 until after the treaty of peace was signed in 1783.

During the whole of this eventful period he continued to represent the three lower counties on the Delaware, although in July 1777, he was selected for the high office of Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, and ably executed its duties in conjunc-

tion with his other important public trusts, among which was the Presidency of the State of Delaware in 1777.

As a Judge of the Orphans' Court and Court of Common Pleas in New Castle county, in February 1766, he ordered the issue and service of the courts' process upon *unstamped* paper and this is believed to be the first court in the colonies by whom such an order was made and executed.

When Rodney and McKean returned to Delaware from their attendance on the Stamp Act Congress at New York, they were received with high honor and every manifestation of respect, and their action in the Congress was approved unanimously of the General Assembly, and a vote of thanks for their energy and ability was passed.

Upon the repeal of the Stamp Act in March 1766, Mr. Rodney was appointed by the Legislature, together with Thomas McKean and George Read, to prepare an address to the King expressive of their grateful sentiments for the action of his government, and this paper was marked with the sincere and tenacious devotion to the Crown which befitted the most attached subjects.

During the next three years Mr. Rodney was in active service as a member of the Legislature and sought unsuccessfully to prohibit the importation of slaves into the province.

About this time a malady which long had given Mr. Rodney uneasiness and disfigured him sadly, had so progressed that he was obliged to leave home for Philadelphia to obtain medical advice.

By the favor of Mrs. H. G. Banning, who possesses the original, I am permitted to read to you the letter to his brother Mr. Thomas Rodney, which contains the first information that his disease was cancer and considered incurable.

PHILADELPHIA, June the 7th, 1768.

SIR:—The morning after I parted with you, I set out from Messrs. Wynkoop and drove to New Castle by dinner time, and intended the morning following to have gone to Chester; but when I ordered my horses in the chariot found

the largest horse so ill, that we were obliged to stay that day at New Castle that he might recruit; but finding he grew worse, I borrowed a saddle and bridle of Mr. Maurice and set out on the other horse, and left John to take care of the chariot and the sick horse, with orders to bring him up as soon as he should be able to travel, but have little reason to expect he will live. I got to Philadelphia on Saturday, and on Monday applied to doctors concerning the sore on my nose, who all, upon examination, pronounced it a cancer, and that it will be necessary I should go through a small course of physick and then to extract it by a costick or by cutting it out, all which (to me) is a dreadful undertaking—and will require so much time, that it is impossible for me now to determine when you may probably expect to see me in Kent again—if ever—as (no doubt) it will be attended with danger. I have a great many friends and advisers; some advise one thing, some another, some advise me to the direction and management of one person, some another, and some to go immediately to England; however, a day or two will determine me. I hope you will not neglect to take the greatest care of all the business I left you in charge. And whenever it shall be necessary, with respect to any business relative to the office, that you will apply to Doctor Ridgely, who I make no doubt will readily lend you his assistance. I have not time to say any more at present, but to request you to remember me kindly to Sally, Billy, and to give my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Vining, the doctor and Mrs. Ridgely, to Sally Ridgely, Sally Gorroll, Betsy Fisher and all enquiring friends.

I am with great esteem, yours,

CÆSAR RODNEY.

P. S.—I have not as yet heard from John, therefore don't know the fate of my horse. Probably you'll know by Mr. Banning, who says he shall call at New Castle.

(Directed.)

To Mr. Thomas Rodney, at Dover.

Favor of Mr. Banning.



A week later he again wrote as follows :

PHILADELPHIA, June 13th, 1768.

DEAR BROTHER:—Yours of the 10th of this instant, I received by Mr. Cooper, and am pleased to find (by your expressions therein) that you have so just a sense of love and duty and gratitude, and do not doubt (if I am obliged to go to England) that by your diligence and prudent attention to business, you will give me sufficient proof of what you now only express. The Governor not only joins with the rest of my friends in pressing me hard to go to England, but of his own accord, assured me that I should have liberty to appoint who I pleased to conduct the business of my offices in my name during my absence. All my friends advised, that, previous to my going to England, I should consult Governor Hamilton. I took their advice and have been at Bush Hill three or four times. His behaviour to me on this occasion was so extremely kind and friendly that I shall be wanting, if I do not hold a grateful remembrance of it as long as I live. He said it was undoubtedly a cancer, and in a most dangerous place, and that he thought my only chance was to go to England, but by no means to trust to any person here. However in a few minutes after, he arose from his chair, took me by the hand and proceeded as follows: "Mr. Rodney I have a very particular respect for you, and will do everything in my power to serve you; I have brought over some of the same medicines that Guy made use of in curing my nose, with his directions for applying them. If you will apply to some Doctor to attend you, you shall have what you want of them, and I will visit you (myself) every day during the operation, that I may be the better able to inform you whether they have the same effect with you as they had with me." Perhaps you will think this a greater mark of friendship than I had any reason to expect from Mr. Hamilton, however it is even so, and to-morrow morning the operation is to be begun under the immediate care of Doctor Thomas Bond, with the approbation of all my friends here.

But if this fails of making a cure, and does not put me in a worse situation than I now am, I shall certainly go to England, after a two or three weeks' visit to my native Kent. I shall meet with no delay on account of cash, tho' it will necessarily require a large sum. But to conclude, my case is truly dangerous, and what will be the event, God only knows, I still live in hopes, and still retain my usual flow of spirits. My compliments Mr. and Mrs. Vining; tell Mrs. Vining, the cloud now hanging over me, tho' dark and dismal, may (God willing) one day disperse, and I may have the pleasure to carry Colly (who waits with patience) to Dover. Give my love to Sally, Billy, etc.; and remember me to the Doctor, Mrs. Ridgely, Sally Gorrell, Betsy Fisher, and all enquiring friends. Pray give the enclosed paper to Doctor Ridgely, and at the same time tell him Governor Hamilton does not incline to sell his lot, but has left it to Mr. Magan. I shall take care to write to you by every opportunity.

I am your affectionate Brother,

CÆSAR RODNEY.

These letters written in the privacy of domestic intercourse and never before published, unconsciously portray the fortitude and cheerful courage of this true man; when it is considered that his physician had communicated to him what was virtually his sentence of death—not the quick, sharp pang, scarcely felt and little heeded in the hour of triumph, cheaply purchased with a life—but death by inches, the slow advance of an insidious and implacable disease. Nothing sensational is displayed, no upbraiding of fate or unmanly bewailing, but a simple announcement of the dreadful truth, and the conclusion, “my case is truly dangerous, and what will be the event God only knows; I still live in hopes and still retain my usual flow of spirits.”

His public duties anchored him fast in America, he never was allowed to visit England, and the remedies obtained in Philadelphia seem to have given him some relief and caused a temporary arrestation of the disease. ut like

a true soldier thenceforward he marched undismayed, his life dedicated only to the performance of his duty, until fourteen years after the Great Captain gave the final order of recall.

Mr. Banning, to whom the first letter was entrusted, was John Banning, Esq., of Kent county, the record of whose patriotic services in various important capacities will be found in the minutes of the council of the Delaware State from 1776 to 1792, of which he was a member, and lately published by order of the Legislature. Among his descendants now living in the State are the Ridgelys, of Dover, Mr. Henry Geddes Banning and Mrs. Sally Ridgely Elliott, wife of Isaac S. Elliott, of Wilmington.

After his return from Philadelphia, Cæsar Rodney, in 1769, was chosen Speaker of the Assembly, and as the unsettled question between Great Britain and Colonies never permitted repose, resistance and discontent grew apace, and the need of his courageous counsel became more urgent as the the arbitrary aggressions of the Crown continued to force the reluctant colonists to decide between resistance or unreserved and slavish submission.

The Stamp Act Congress had thus brought about colonial union. The vindictive legislation of Great Britain continued, and the town of Boston seemed especially marked for royal vengeance. The charter of Massachusetts was rudely violated in its most essential features; the port of Boston was closed to all commerce, and every safeguard to personal liberty and local self-government was abrogated.

Such action served to precipitate the inevitable conflict, and early in 1774, a general Continental Congress of the representatives of each colony was recommended by Massachusetts, and ready response soon came from every quarter.

No colony moved with more alacrity than Delaware, and by none was the manly determination to make the cause of Massachusetts their own, and to resist at the threshold all measures intended for their subjugation more distinctly and clearly avowed. The general meeting of the freeholders and

inhabitants of New Castle county was at the town of New Castle, June 29, 1774, Thomas McKean being their chairman.

The freeholders and inhabitants of Kent met in Dover, on July 20, 1774, and a like meeting was held by the free-men of Sussex county, at Lewestown, on July 23d. The tenor of the resolutions adopted in each county was substantially the same, and after the most express and solemn recognition of the sovereignty of George the Third, and promising due allegiance to his government, recited the various acts of Parliamentary oppression against Boston, so dangerous to the common cause of America. Each county appointed a committee of thirteen members to correspond with similar committees in the State and in the sister Colonies, and Cæsar Rodney was one of the number from Kent. On August 1st the three counties met in convention at New Castle and Rodney was made chairman.

The resolutions adopted on August 2, 1774, recite the history of American grievances with a vigor and dignity that characterizes the public utterances of the period.

It was at once unanimously resolved to instruct the deputies then appointed to attend the general Congress, and "that they do endeavor to prevail with the deputies from other colonies to adopt the following or similar resolutions."

The length of these resolutions forbids me to read them, as they are found in Vol. I, page 667, of the fourth series of the American Archives.

Nowhere is the American case more clearly and unequivocally stated, and I cannot forbear to recite the 7th and 8th resolutions as indicative of the unselfish action of the Delaware freemen and of their lofty determination to maintain the rights of others as well as their own.

7. That it is the indispensable duty of all the colonies, not only to alleviate the unexampled distresses of our brethren of Massachusetts Bay, who are suffering in the common

cause of America, but to assist them by all lawful means in removing their grievances, and for re-establishing their constitutional rights, as well as those of all America, on a solid and permanent foundation.

8. That it is our fixed, determined and unalterable resolution, by all lawful ways and means in our power, to maintain, defend and preserve our before-mentioned rights and liberties, and that we will transmit them entire and inviolate to our posterity ; and, further, that we will adopt and faithfully carry into execution, all and singular, such peaceable and constitutional measures as have been agreed on by this Congress.

The men who led the councils of Delaware were well instructed in the English law and lived in obedience to its precepts, therefore when they met in popular convention they recognized "the most eligible mode of endeavoring to procure redress for their grievances would have been through their Legislative assembly," but as that body could not be convened until September 30th, following, and as the Proprietary (John Penn) had already refused to convene the Legislature of Pennsylvania, when so requested for the same purpose, the best and most proper mode was by this convention, and this characteristic resolution is to be found at p. 897 of the volume of the American Archives already cited. The three deputies to the Continental Congress were Cæsar Rodney, Thomas McKean and George Read.

This Congress met at Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, and was composed of 56 delegates, among whom was George Washington, of Virginia. Their sessions lasted until October 26, 1774, and their proceedings relate to all the measures of Parliament which were considered unconstitutional and subversive of the rights and liberties of the colonists as British subjects.

Among the remarkable state papers produced by this assembly is the "Plan of Association" signed by all the deputies, from which I select three of the resolutions, al-

though it is difficult to refrain from laying before you the noble document entire.

“To obtain redress of these grievances which threaten destruction to the Lives, Liberty, and Property of his Majesty’s Subjects in North America, we are of opinion that a Non-Importation, Non-Consumption, and Non-Exportation Agreement, faithfully adhered to, will prove the more speedy, effectual, and peaceable measure; and therefore we do, for ourselves, and the inhabitants of the several Colonies whom we represent, firmly agree and associate, under the Sacred ties of Virtue, Honor, and Love of our Country, as follows:

I. That from and after the first day of December next, we will not import into British America, from Great Britain or Ireland, any Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, as shall have been exported from Great Britain or Ireland; nor will we, after that day, import any East India Tea from any part of the world; nor any molasses, syrups, paneles, coffee, or pimento from the British plantations or from Dominica; nor wines from Madeira, or the Western Islands; nor foreign Indigo.

II. That we will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures to those who are concerned in it.

III. As a Non-Consumption Agreement strictly adhered to, will be an effectual security for the observation of the Non-Importation, we, as above, solemnly agree and associate, that from this day we will not purchase or use any tea imported on account of the East India Company, or any on which a duty hath been or shall be placed; and from and after the first day of March next we will not purchase or use any East India tea whatsoever; nor will we, nor shall any person for or under us, purchase or use any of those goods, wares, or merchandises we have agreed not to import, which we shall know, or have cause to suspect, were imported after

the first day of December, except such as come under the rules and directions of the tenth Article hereinafter mentioned.

IV. The earnest desire we have not to injure our fellow subjects in Great Britian, Ireland, or the West Indies, induces us to suspend a Non-Exportation until the tenth day of September, 1775, at which time, if the said Acts and parts of Acts of the British Parliament hereinafter mentioned, are not repealed, we will not, directly or indirectly, export any Merchandise or Commodity whatsoever to Great Britian, Ireland, or the West Indies, except Rice to Europe.

By this we see how gradually the union of the colonies was formed—not by any single act or declaration—but by the silent and natural growth of the unwritten laws of human sympathy and congenial association for noble and worthy ends.

“The sacred ties of virtue, honor and love of country” were the strong cords that drew the hearts of our forefathers together, and against such influences were arrayed then, as now, the mean and mercenary forces of society, trading then as now, upon the baser and purchasable elements.

Unhappy is that nation from whose people is banished a belief in the disinterestedness of public service, which is naturally accompanied by broad and liberal views, which do not measure or test great purposes by constant reference to one small object—personal advantage or profit.

This it is that makes mercenary politicians such unsafe leaders, and causes national interests so often to be led to their destruction by men of narrow understandings, incapable of taking any but mercenary and commercial views of questions of governmental policy.

The Delaware Assembly met at New Castle on March 13, 1775, and to them Rodney, McKean and Reed, made full report of their representative action in the Continental Congress of October previous, and laid before the Assembly the journal of the proceedings of that Congress.

On the next day these proceedings were deliberated upon

and *nemine contra dicente* it was resolved that the proceedings of the Congress, and especially the part therein by the Delaware representatives, be approved with thanks.

On the 11th of March, Cæsar Rodney, George Reed and Thomas McKean were again unanimously chosen to represent the government of the three counties at the American Congress proposed to be held in the City of Philadelphia, on the 10th of May next, or at any other time and place with full power to them *or any two of them* together with the delegates from the other American Colonies to concert and agree upon such further measures as shall appear to them best calculated for the accommodation of the unhappy differences between Great Britain and the colonies on a *constitutional foundation* which the House most ardently wish for, and that they report their proceedings to the House at their next meeting.

It will be observed how carefully all violence of language or intemperance of expression was avoided, and that no other settlement than on a "constitutional basis" was hinted at.

And this basis was of course the continuance of colonial relations to the British sovereign. At the same session petitions were however presented from the inhabitants, freemen of New Castle and Kent, praying for the establishment of a militia and the phraseology of the petition from Kent is noticeable and highly significant of what was then passing in the minds of men.

"That we conceive a well regulated militia composed of gentlemen freeholders, and other freemen, to be not only a constitutional right, but natural strength of a free government from the exercise of which a wise people will not excuse themselves in time of peace."

The Assembly on the 29th of March, carefully prepared and considered, "paragraph by paragraph," and inscribed upon their minutes the following instructions to their "Deputies to the general Congress" to meet May 10, 1776:



Instructions to the deputies appointed by this government to meet in general congress on the tenth day of May next :

I. That in every act to be done in Congress, you studiously avoid, as you have heretofore done, every thing disrespectful or offensive to our most gracious Sovereign, or in any measure invasive of his just rights and prerogative.

II. That you do adhere to those claims and resolutions made and agreed upon at the last meeting of the Congress ; yet, for the restoration of that harmony with the parent state which is so essential to the security and happiness of the whole British Empire, and which is so ardently wished for by this House, you may, on your parts, yield such contested claims of right as do not apparently belong to the Colonists, or are not essentially necessary to their well being.

III. If his Majesty should be pleased graciously to appoint any person or persons to treat with the Colonies on the present unhappy disputes subsisting between them and the parent state, you, or any of you the Congress shall nominate, may treat with such person or persons on behalf of the inhabitants of this government.

IV. If the Congress, when formed, shall not in every question to be voted by provinces, allow this government an equal vote with any other province or government on this continent, you are decently but firmly to urge the right of this government to an equal voice in Congress with the other Colonies.

The House adjourned till the fifth day of June next.

But events were moving more rapidly than could be provided for by formal resolutions. The Delaware Assembly adjourned on March 29th, and in three weeks afterwards the battle of Lexington was fought, and

“ By the rude bridge that arched the flood  
 Their flag to April's breeze unfurled ;  
 \* \* \* The embattled farmers stood  
 And fired the shot heard round the world.”



In June followed the battle of Bunker's Hill, and the season for argument and deliberation had passed and hotly pressing for its place came the demand for decisive action.

Men of action were called for by the times, and men of action responded to the call. As a poet of our own day has sung :—

Wanted, men—  
Not systems fit and wise,  
Not faiths with rigid eyes,  
Not wealth in mountains piled,  
Not power, with gracious smile,  
Not e'en the potent pen—  
Wanted, men !

Wanted, deeds—  
Not words of winning note,  
Not thoughts from life remote,  
Not fond religious airs,  
Not sweetly languid prayers,  
Not softly scented creeds—  
Wanted, deeds !

Cæsar Rodney was a man of action in an era of action ; born not out of his proper time, but in it ; and, being fitted for the hour and its work, he did it well. He was recognized, and naturally, at once became influential and impressive—distinguished for the qualities which were needed in the days in which he lived on earth.

He was possessed of a noble ardor ; his spirit was aflame and it never flickered or wavered throughout the long and weary conflict that followed.

He had served in the Continental Congress of 1774 with Washington ; he knew of Washington's utterance in the Virginia Convention early in 1774, when he was delegated to attend in Philadelphia :—

“I will raise one thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march myself at their head for the relief of Boston.”

Moved by patriotic impulse, he had counselled the selection of Washington as Commander-in-Chief of the colonial forces, and from the beginning to the end of the conflict sought to hold up his hands and sustain him at all times and in all ways.

It is to the honor of Cæsar Rodney and his native State, that he gained and retained to the end the absolute confidence of Washington. Thanks be to God, my brother Delawareans, thanks be to God, the history of our little commonwealth in the war for American independence discloses the name of no venal or selfishly ambitious trader in his country's woes, and here at home, in the character and traditions of men of our own State, we and our children can look for exemplars of courage and fidelity equal to any in the broad land. Their numbers were few, and the trumpet of local and self laudation not so loud as may sometimes have been heard in other quarters, but every Delawarean may proudly look and ask the whole world to look, upon the unsullied record of our revolutionary ancestors, and find there abundant cause for honest pride and grateful remembrance.

Cæsar Rodney had the "*Suaviter in modo*" as well as the "*fortiter in re*."

He had valor, but he had that discretion which is its better and more unselfish part. He was liberal in his judgments and generous to his antagonists. Hence his power and success in allaying local irritations and disaffections; of composing strifes; of converting opponents into allies, and foes into friends.

I have diligently read all the documents within my reach which relate to the action of the inhabitants of these counties during the war for independence, and I concur in the statement made by our lamented friend Judge William G. Whitely, in his address before the Legislature in 1875, "that to Rodney more than to any other man in Delaware do we owe the position which our State and people took in that most important contest."

Three very interesting and characteristic letters of Cæsar

Rodney addressed to his brother, Captain Thomas Rodney, at Dover, written during the session of the Continental Congress at Philadelphia, in September 1775, are to be found in Vol. I of the 4th series of the American Archives, and portray the situation very clearly, and the lively interest and intelligent comprehension he had of the events then transpiring in Massachusetts, and the necessary consequences to all the colonies.

The stir of military preparations for a conflict, which filled the very air men breathed, but which had not been formulated into thoughts, much less into words, began here in Delaware before the battle of Lexington.

Already the preparations for the enrollment and equipment of the militia had been vigorously carried out, and in each county the election of field officers remained only to be held, in order to perfect the regimental organizations. New Castle county led off on March 20, 1775, by a meeting of all the company officers, at Christiana bridge, and the choice of field officers for two regiments.

For the Upper Division,

JAMES MCKINLEY, Colonel.

JAMES LATIMER, Lt.-Colonel.

THOMAS DUFF, Major.

For the Lower Division,

THOMAS COOCH, Colonel.

SAMUEL PATTERSON, Lt.-Colonel.

GUNNING BEDFORD, Major.

Kent followed by a convention at Dover, on May 25th, of the officers of more than twenty companies and for the Upper Regiment were chosen:

CÆSAR RODNEY, Colonel.

THOMAS COLLINS, Lt.-Colonel.

FRENCH BATTELL, Major.

For the Lower Regiment,

JOHN HASLET, Colonel.

WILLIAM RHODES, Lt.-Colonel.

ROBERT HODGES, Major.

Sussex organized in a convention at Broad Creek on June 20, 1775, of which Colonel John Dagworthy was made chairman.

No election of field officers was made, but the minutes reported that "military preparations for self-defence against the bloody attacks of the infatuated British ministry were being carried out with great spirit, and that it was expected to have 1500 or more well-trained militia, and the committee was endeavoring to obtain the necessary supplies of military stores."

Cæsar Rodney was Speaker of the House at the time he was so chosen colonel of the upper regiment of Kent county, and there would really seem to have been no limit to his readiness to serve in any useful capacity, civil or military, and certainly none to the willingness of his fellow citizens to heap the honors, cares and responsibilities of office upon him. The General Assembly in 1777 chose him to be Second Justice of the Supreme Court, and subsequently Judge of Admiralty.

He was appointed in 1776 Brigadier-General, and as such was on duty with the army under Washington at Trenton and remained until February 1777, when he was allowed to return home and subsequently was made Major-General.

On this occasion he received the following letter from General Washington:

"SIR:—Lord Sterling did me the favor of sending to me your letter of the eighth instant to him, mentioning your cheerfulness to continue in service (though your brigade had returned home), and waiting my determination on that head. The readiness with which you took the field at the period most critical to our affairs, the industry you used in bringing out the militia of the Delaware State, and the alertness observed by you in forwarding on the troops from Trenton, reflect the highest honor on your character, and place your attachment to the cause in the most distinguished point of view. They claim my sincerest thanks, and I am happy in this op-



portunity of giving them to you, circumstanced as you are. I see no necessity in detaining you longer from your family and affairs which no doubt demand your presence and attention. You have therefore my leave to return.’’

Any biography of Rodney must be in substance a chapter in the history of his State and the confederacy of which she was a member, for his unceasing devotion never flagged, and, happily, never failed to receive public appreciation.

The most memorable act in Mr. Rodney’s career must now be noticed. Together with George Reed and Thomas McKean he had been chosen as one of the Representatives of the three lower counties on the Delaware to the general Congress to meet at Philadelphia on May 10, 1776, and, as usual, accepted the duty.

I have read to you, and I fear at some trial to your patience, the expressions of attachment to the Crown which marked all the utterances of the colonists through the period of growing alienation, the result of which they might suspect, but were reluctant to admit.

The wisest men in the country were most restrained in their expressions, and formed their judgments under the deepest sense of a responsibility greater than which never rested upon a body of representative men.

Allow me to read to you an extract from a letter addressed by George Washington to a friend in the British army at Boston, written from Philadelphia, where Washington was in attendance upon the Continental Congress as a delegate from Virginia.

After defending the delegates from Massachusetts against the charge of being “rebellious,” he goes on to say:

“Give me leave to add, and I think I can announce it as a fact that it is not the wish or interest of that Government (Massachusetts) or any other upon this continent, separately or collectively, to set up for independence; but this you may at the same time rely on, that none of them will ever sub-

mit to the loss of those valuable rights and privileges which are essential to the happiness of any free State, and without which life, liberty and property, are rendered totally insecure."

And he continues: "But I have done. I was involuntarily lead into a short discussion of this subject by your remarks on the conduct of the Boston people, and your opinion of their wishes to set up for independence. *I am well satisfied that no such thing is desired by any thinking man in all North America!* On the contrary, that it is the ardent wish of the warmest advocates of liberty that peace and tranquility upon constitutional grounds may be restored and civil discord prevented."

Washington wrote these words on the 9th of October 1774, and yet on the 15th of June following he was, on motion of Thomas Johnson of Maryland, seconded by John Adams of Massachusetts, elected by the unanimous vote of the Continental Congress Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the United Colonies, and at once accepted the duty and set out for New England.

But while determined to resist subjugation and loss of liberty, the hope was still widely prevalent among the colonists that some settlement on "a constitutional basis" as it was styled in the instructions to their deputies by the Delaware Assembly, might still be secured without resort to the dread arbitrament of war.

The history of that period contains abundant illustrations of the independence of the judgment of the representatives of the people, and the frank avowal of opinions which at the time were often unpopular but proclaimed nevertheless conscientiously and fearlessly.

He is the true public counsellor who will utter *vera pro gratis*, and who may displease, but never will deceive the people who trust him.

But equally with independent judgment and individuality in process of thought, we find splendid proof of self-

subordination and self-control which, when personal opinion and judgment has been over-ruled by a majority, are not to be deterred, by a false pride or narrow egotism, from lending cordial support to the measures which are the outcome of free and unfettered conference.

Deliberation has its proper season, decision must follow, and action is the final and necessary test.

In the perilous days of 1776 the colonists hesitated long, and sincerely sought to avert the necessity of making the momentous decision to which they had most reluctantly been driven.

The doubts were many and natural, the "hopes and fears that conquer hope," were indeed "an indistinguishable throng," and invested with such a trust can it be wondered that hesitation to take the final plunge, to "cross the Rubicon" agitated the souls of the forty-eight earnest patriots, who assembled in the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia, in May 1776?

As true and faithful patriots as any in the land were those members of the Congress who opposed the resolution to declare independence, or to sign the declaration when the resolution had been adopted.

There is no authentic report or record of the debates, and even the minutes of the proceedings in the secret, or in the public journal of proceedings are imperfect, fragmentary and palpably defective.

I possess a copy of the secret journals of the Continental Congress from its first meeting, May 10, 1775, until the dissolution of the Confederation by the adoption of the present Constitution of the United States.

Much confusion, contradiction, and no little misrepresentation, have naturally been the consequences of the publication of their recollections by individual members communicated many years after the occurrences and professing to relate their own share, and the share of others in the exciting transactions.

The following resolution, adopted November 9, 1775,



will show how stringently it was sought to maintain secrecy :—

*Resolved*, That every member of this Congress consider himself, under the ties of virtue, honor and love of his country, not to divulge, directly or indirectly, any matter or thing agitated or debated in Congress before the same shall have been determined in Congress; nor any matter determined in Congress which a majority of the Congress shall order to be kept secret; and that if any member shall violate this agreement he shall be expelled from this Congress and deemed an enemy to the liberties of America and liable to be treated as such; and that every member signify his assent to this agreement by signing the same."

Cæsar Rodney died in June 1784, soon after the independence of his country had been achieved, and during the struggle he was too much absorbed in gaining the victory to think of outlining his own laudation or preserving the muniments of his title to the applause and gratitude of mankind.

He left no memoranda or written account of the proceedings nor of the part he bore therein, and to the testimony of others we must resort to do his memory justice, and fortunately it is explicit and indubitable.

His mind was much disturbed by the conflict of arguments that presented themselves, and it is fairly pictured in an account written by his brother, Colonel Thomas Rodney, and which I have been permitted to transcribe from the original manuscript.

"In the year 1776, when independence began to be agitated in Congress, General Rodney, who, with Mr. McKean and Mr. Read, then representing Delaware in the Congress, came home to consult his friends and constituents on that important question.

"He communicated the matter to his brother, Colonel Rodney, and observed that he had a great deal at stake, and

that almost all his old friends in Congress were against it, particularly Andrew Allen, John Dickson, Robert Morris and his colleague, George Read, and that it must of necessity eventually injure the proprietor and all his friends, for whom he had a very great friendship and regard ; that in every point of view the question was important, and it would be difficult to say what might be best; that on one side stood a doubtful experience and a bloody war, and on the other unconditional submission to the power of Great Britain ; that those who were against deciding now argued that there was yet a possibility of reconciliation on constitutional principles, but if we declared ourselves independent all expectations of reconciliation would be cut off. On the other side, he argued that while we continued in our present situation no foreign nation could enter into alliance with us or afford us any public friendship ; that all our dependence being on foreign firearms, ammunition and other supplies, we had no way to obtain them but in a clandestine manner, which could not possibly enable us to oppose the power of Great Britain ; that she was exerting herself in every part of Europe to prevent our getting supplies ; that she had declared us out of her protection, and was making every kind of exertion in her power to reduce us to unconditional submission ; that all her conduct so fully induced this intention that no hope of reconciliation on constitutional principles could possibly remain."

With such contending forces in his mind, Mr. Rodney had left Philadelphia, where Congress was in session, and was actively exerting himself in Delaware to organize the community into military efficiency to subdue discontents and promote harmony of action in the cause of liberty.

Whilst he was so occupied in Kent and Sussex counties, the issue proclaiming the colonies independent was made in Congress, where Thomas McKean and George Read were in attendance, and their views were not in accord on this vital question.

On June 7th Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, offered a resolution, "that the United States are, and ought to be, free and independent States, and that political connection with Great Britain ought to be dissolved."

This resolution was discussed with closed doors and passed the next day by the very close vote of seven States to six.

The secret journal contains no note whatever of this resolution, nor of the appointment of the committee of which Thomas Jefferson was the chairman, to prepare a Declaration of Independence.

It was felt that unanimity was so requisite that the determination of the question was postponed until July 1st. On July 1st a vote was again taken, and nine colonies voted in favor and Pennsylvania and South Carolina against it.

The vote of Delaware was not cast, because McKean and Read voted on opposite sides, and the delegates from New York were excused from voting by reason of the doubtful nature of their instructions.

It was at this juncture that Thomas McKean, who strongly advocated the Declaration of Independence, dispatched a mounted messenger to ride post-haste to Dover for Cæsar Rodney, and bid him speed to Philadelphia, where on the 4th of July, the question was to be finally voted upon and determined.

I can discover no entry in the secret journal under any other dates between June 24th and July 17th, except July 8th and 11th (neither of which minutes contains any reference to the question of independence), either of Lee's resolution nor the declaration committed to Jefferson and his four associates for preparation.

But under the date of 19th of July the following resolution is recorded:

"That the declaration passed on the 4th, be fairly engrossed on parchment, with the title and style of 'THE UNANIMOUS DECLARATION OF THE THIRTEEN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,' and that the same, when engrossed, be signed by every member of Congress."

On the 2d of August the minutes state: "The Declaration of Independence being engrossed and compared at the table was signed by the members."

This last statement is inaccurate and misleading, as it is certain that several members whose names appear upon the document did not become members until the month of November following, so that the time when the respective signatures were made is not authenticated and many subsequently signed the Declaration who had voted against its adoption. But the share of our patriot, Cæsar Rodney, is the point now under examination. Eighty long miles lay between Dover in Delaware and Philadelphia. Mr. McKean's messenger could not have been dispatched until late in the afternoon of July 1st, after the adjournment, and it must have been a remarkable horse or a relay that could bring him to Dover before the night of July 2d.

At one of his farms, "Byfield" or "Poplar Grove," several miles out from Dover, he must have found Mr. Rodney, and when McKean's message was received, you may know how little time was there for dainty preparation, barely enough for tightening of saddle girths and buckling on of spurs, before the good horse stood ready to be mounted, and our hero began his immortal ride on that hot and dusty July day, to carry into the Congress of the Colonies the vote he held in trust for the people of Delaware, and which was needed to make the Declaration of American Independence the unanimous act of thirteen united States.

More than a century has rolled by since that eventful ride; rider and steed have long since turned to dust, but the echoes of those flying hoofs will reverberate in American ears like the footfalls of fate,

"Far on in summers that we shall not see,"

and the great heart of the nation will throb with emotion when the story is told, and told again, of the ride of Rodney bearing the message of the little State to her sisters in a glorious confederacy.

The genius of Longfellow and the skill of the sculptor have aided to perpetuate in verse and marble the memory of Paul Revere, of Boston, "the messenger of the Revolution," and his midnight ride before the battles of Concord and Lexington.

I rejoice that such just tribute should be rendered, nor would I take one leaf from that patriot's chaplet, nay, indeed would point to the example of the people of Massachusetts in thus commemorating, as is their wont, one of their own citizens, as worthy of being followed in this State, and it may well be asked if the ride of Paul Revere has been so kept in men's memories, why should not the infinitely greater and more important service of Rodney to the united colonies be even more impressively marked by us?

Within a few days a letter has been placed in my hands by Mr. John M. C. Rodney, of Wilmington, addressed to his grandfather, Cæsar Augustus Rodney, by Thomas McKean, dated at Philadelphia, August 22, 1813, which has never been published, although a letter of similar tenor was written by Mr. McKean to John Adams, in January 1814, and is to be found in the 10th volume of Mr. Adams' works. From the absence of any note or commentary by Mr. Adams on Mr. McKean's statements, it may be assumed that he concurred in them.

But here is Mr. McKean's account of his own and Cæsar Rodney's vote for the Declaration of Independence, or the resolution to declare independence on July 4, 1776:

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 22, 1813.

DEAR SIR :—Your favor of the 22d last month, with a copy of the journal of the Congress at New York, in October 1765, printed in the Baltimore "Register," came safe to hand. Not having heard of this publication, I had the proceedings of that body—not the whole—reprinted here about two months ago, from a copy I found in the 1st vol. of "American Tracts," contained in four volumes octavo, edited by I. Almon, of London, in 1767. Such an important

transaction should not be unknown to the future historian. I recollect what passed in Congress in the beginning of July 1776 respecting independence; it was not as you have conceived. On Monday, the 1st of July, the question was taken in the committee of the whole, when the State of Pennsylvania, represented by seven gentlemen then present, voted against it. Delaware, having then only two representatives present, was divided; all the other States voted in favor of it. Whereupon, without delay, I sent an express, at my own private expense, for your honored uncle, Cæsar Rodney, Esquire, the remaining member for Delaware, whom I met at the state house door, in his boots and spurs, as the members were assembling. After a friendly salutation, without a word on the business, we went into the hall of Congress together, and found we were among the latest. Proceedings immediately commenced, and after a few minutes the great question was put. When the vote for Delaware was called, your uncle arose and said: "As I believe the voice of my constituents and of all sensible and honest men is in favor of independence my own judgment concurs with them, I vote for independence," or in words to the same effect. The State of Pennsylvania on the 4th of July (there being only five members present, Messrs. Dickinson and Morris, who had in the committee of the whole voted against independence, were absent,) voted for it; three to two, Messrs. Willing and Humphries in the negative. Unanimity in the thirteen States, an all important point in so great an occasion, was thus obtained; the dissention of a single State might have produced very dangerous consequences.

Now that I am on this subject, I will tell you some truths not generally known. In the printed public journal of Congress for 1776, Vol. 2, it would appear that the Declaration of Independence was signed on the 4th of July by the the members whose names are there inserted, but the fact is not so, for no person signed it on that day, nor for many days after, and among the names subscribed, one was against it, Mr. Read, and seven were not in Congress on that day,

namely, Messrs. Morris, Rush, Clymer, Smith, Taylor, and Ross, of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Thornton, of New Hampshire, nor were the six gentlemen last named at that time members; the five for Pennsylvania were appointed delegates by the convention of that State on the 20th of July, and Mr. Thornton entered Congress for the first time on the 4th of November following; when the names of Henry Wisner, of New York, and Thomas McKean, of Delaware, not printed as subscribers, though both were present and voted for independence. Here false colors are certainly hung out; there is culpability somewhere. What I can offer as an apology or explanation is, that on the 4th of July, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was ordered to be engrossed in parchment, and then to be signed, and I have been told that a resolve had passed a few days after and was entered on the *secret* journal, that no person should have a seat in Congress during that year until he should have signed the declaration, in order, as I have been given to understand, to prevent traitors or spies from worming themselves among us. I was not in Congress after the 4th for some months, having marched with my regiment of associators of this city, as Colonel, to support General Washington, until a flying camp of ten thousand men was completed. When the associators were discharged I returned to Philadelphia, took my seat in Congress and then signed the declaration on parchment. Two days after I went to New Castle, joined the convention for forming a constitution for the future government of the State of Delaware, having been elected a member of New Castle county, which I wrote in a tavern without a book or any assistance. You may rely on the accuracy of the foregoing relation. It is full time to print and publish the *secret* journal of Congress during the revolution. I have thus answered your request, and trust it may reform errors. Accept, dear sir, my best wishes for your happiness.

THOS. MCKEAN.

Cæsar Augustus Rodney, Esquire.

I have a fac-simile of the Declaration of Independence upon which the names of the Delaware representatives all three appear, but in the first volume of the Laws of Delaware, at page 78 of the appendix, the declaration and the names of the signers are printed and that of Thomas McKean is omitted. It is true that at the end of the volume, in type so small as to be almost illegible, in the *addenda et errata*, an explanation is given, but as the volume of the laws was not published until 1797, it is proper that so serious and unjustifiable an omission should be emphatically corrected.

Mr. McKean's own letters are ample evidence of the fact, not only of his mere vote and signature, but that to his energy and influence the presence of Rodney at the supreme moment was in large measure due.

On July 27, 1776, the Delaware Assembly met and took into consideration the resolution of Congress for carrying out the Declaration of Independence and suppressing all authority of Great Britain and establishing a government upon the authority of the people.

A convention was called consisting of ten delegates from each county to meet in convention at New Castle on the 27th of August.

This convention met at New Castle on August 27, 1776, and agreed upon a constitution of the government of THE DELAWARE STATE, formerly styled the Government of the Counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex upon Delaware.

This constitution, on September 20, 1776, and a notable Declaration of Rights and Fundamental Rules of the Delaware State, was promulgated September 11, 1776.

The provisions of this document are well worthy of study, and it will be found in full on page 79 of the appendix to the first volume of the Delaware Laws.

Of this convention George Read was president and James Booth, secretary.

If, as Mr. McKean states in the letter I read to you just now, he "wrote this constitution in a tavern in New



Castle, without a book or any assistance," it is a monument alike to his powers as a draughtsman and his knowledge of the common law of England.

In December 1777 Mr. Rodney was again chosen a Representative in the Continental Congress, thus combining civil with military duty, and performing both with ceaseless activity. This was the rule and not the exception. Thomas McKean's signature to the Declaration of Independence was delayed several months, because he had to march at the head of his regiment before the instrument could be engrossed. The minutes of the Delaware Council in January 1777, show that a messenger was dispatched with letters from the speaker to Colonel Collins and Captain Richard Bassett, members of the Council, requiring their attendance, if consistent, with the service they were then engaged in in the army under General Washington.

The geographical position of the peninsula on which the State of Delaware lies, renders the territory between the two great bays of the Delaware and Chesapeake, penetrated at countless points by estuaries, peculiarly assailable.

Few indeed were the homesteads which were not liable to sudden night attacks and depredation by parties landed from British armed vessels.

The strategetical significance of the peninsula in those early days of imperfect and difficult lines of inland communication and transportation can well be comprehended, and the enemy having complete control of the water approaches, it became a cause of constant anxiety with Washington and his compatriots to anticipate and thwart their plans of attack.

The inhabitants of lower Delaware were peculiarly exposed, and were left entirely to their own means of protection.

We had no navy and I have been unable to discover that any armed forces from the Continental armies were ever during the war detailed for their defence and shall presently refer to the number of troops recruited for the Continental armies from this State, thus lessening their power for local self-defence. As early as May 10, 1776, Congress commu-

nicated to General Washington the results of an encounter in the Delaware River in which the British men-of-war, the Roebuck of 44 guns and the Liverpool of 24 guns, were driven by the fleet of armed boats called gondolas from the mouth of Christiana Creek down to Reedy Island.

But as these armed boats were maintained chiefly for the defence of the port of Philadelphia, they did nothing to protect the inhabitants of Lewes and other points in the lower Delaware. I find a letter from Col. Haslet to the Congress written from Lewes on April 9th, reporting the capture of a lieutenant and three soldiers from the Roebuck, they having been off on some expedition and driven on shore.

In his interesting and valuable compilation of the life and letters of George Read, Mr. William T. Read has published a letter written by Washington's order to General Read, notifying him that a fleet of thirty-six sail had just left Staten Island to effect an union with Lord Howe and seeking information as to their point of landing.

Their extensive water front was a constant invitation to attacks and emboldened the British emissaries and sympathizers. British vessels patrolled Delaware Bay, holding frequent communication with the shore, landing at night and causing terror to the inhabitants. Mr. McKean wrote to John Adams that when after the landing of General Howe at the head of the Elk River in August 1777, he (McKean) was excuting the duties of the President of Delaware, that he "was hnnnted like a fox," was compelled to move his family five times in a few months, and at last hid them in a little log house on the banks of the Susquehanna, from whence they were soon obliged to move from fear of the Indians.

So open to assault from the sea was the peninsula, and liable to be occupied and made the base of hostile expeditions, that in 1781 when the expedition under Benedict Arnold was being fitted out at New York, and with which he so ruthlessly ravaged the country adjacent to the Rappahannock and James rivers in Virginia, it was feared that the landing would be on this peninsula; whereupon to prevent its occupation by the

enemy, Congress actually decided that the only measure was to denude the region in question of all its live stock, provisions and supplies, and starve the inhabitants in order to deprive the enemy of support in case they should decide to land.

A regiment of horse under Colonel Morland was charged with the execution of this order of devastation, but Rodney's arrival in Philadelphia and his representations and stout resistance caused a modification of the order and a reduction of the force to a single company. This company was ordered not to proceed further than Christiana bridge until the commander should have personally waited upon President Rodney at Dover and President Tilghman on the eastern shore of Maryland, and had learned their judgments in the matter, by which he was to be governed. This was the last of the proposition to desolate our own territory by the forces of our own government.

Although this liability to invasion all along our extended water front caused great anxiety and much groundless suspicion, and gave rise to many wild rumors of insurrection against colonial authority, yet I am bound to say that the records of these times, so far as I have read them, disclose a great alertness on the part of the colonists and prompt and vigorous investigation, which never ended in any very important discovery of danger.

Thus I find the case of Mr. Robert Holliday was considered of sufficient importance to record it in the American Archives, and its recital may give not an unfair idea of the action of the patriots of Kent towards suspected persons. On May 2, 1775, the Committee of Inspection at Dover had laid before them a letter from the President of the Committee on Correspondence, as follows, which may amuse as well as instruct as to the condition of affairs:

*To the Committee of Correspondence for Kent county, on Delaware:*

"I acknowledge to have wrote a piece (and did not sign it), since said to be an extract of a letter from Kent county,

on Delaware, published in Humphrey's "Ledger," No. 3. It was not dated from any place, and is somewhat altered from the original. I folded it up and directed the same to Joshua Fisher and sons. I had no intention to have it published, and further let them know the author thought best it should not be published, nor did I think they would. I am sincerely sorry I ever wrote it as also for its being published, and hope I may be excused for this my first breach in this way, and I intend it shall be the last. ROBERT HOLLIDAY."

*Resolved unanimously,* That this be not satisfactory, and that Mr. Holliday be requested to attend the Committee at their next meeting, on Tuesday the ninth instant, then to give further satisfaction for the gross misinterpretation of the people of this country, by said letter, from which an extract was published in Humphrey's "Ledger."

TUESDAY, May 9th, P. M.

The committee met according to adjournment, when Mr. Holliday appeared and offered to make the necessary concessions for his conduct.

On motion, *Resolved,* That a committee be appointed to draw up Mr. Holliday's concessions in writing.

This being done, Mr. Holliday waited on the committee with his concessions, drawn up in the form of an address, as follows:

*To the Committee of Inspection for Kent County, on Delaware:*

GENTLEMEN:—With sorrow and contrition for my weakness and folly, I confess myself the author of the letter from which an extract was published in the third number of Humphrey's "Ledger," said to be from Kent county, on Delaware, but at the same time do declare it was published without my consent, and not without some alterations.

I am now convinced the political sentiments therein contained were founded in the grossest errors, more especially that malignant insinuation that "if the King's

standard were now erected nine out of ten would repair to it," could not have been suggested but from the deepest insinuation. True, indeed, it is the people of this country have ever shown a zealous attachment to his Majesty's person and government, and whenever he raised his standard in a just cause were ready to flock to it; but let the severe account I now render to an injured people witness to the world that none are more ready to oppose tyranny or to be first in the cause of liberty than the inhabitants of Kent county.

Conscious that I can render no satisfaction adequate to the injuries done my country, I can only beg the forgiveness of my countrymen upon those principles of humanity which may induce them to consider the frailty of human nature. And I do profess and promise that I will never again oppose those laudable measures necessarily adopted by my countrymen for the preservation of American freedom, but will co-operate with them to the utmost of my abilities in their virtuous struggle for liberty, so far as is consistent with my religious principles.

ROBERT HOLLIDAY.

May 9, 1775.

Voted satisfactory.

Published by order of the committee.

THOMAS NIXON, JR., Clerk.

Another recorded case in Sussex was for the alleged selling of some few ounces of tea from a canister, and some words deemed disrespectful to the authorities, but I can find no report of armed resistance to the local authorities, nor do I think the temper of the times, nor the disposition of the inhabitants could have made this region a healthy or a happy home for the friends of King George after the war commenced.

When the Rodneys came here from England, in 1682, they brought with them family names, family traditions, and the military coat of arms of their ancestors.

I have here an emblazoned copy; it consists of an eagle rising, as the crest, with three eagles displayed on the shield and the legend, "*Non generant Aquilæ Columbas.*"

"Eagles do not beget doves," and assuredly there was much more of the eagle than the dove in Cæsar Rodney, and I suspect the same might be said of the great body of his compatriots.

The great American eagle has never been noted for progeny of a dove-like character.

The Rodney family, on both sides of the Atlantic, had the meaning of this fierce emblem and motto running in their blood. During the same years that Cæsar Rodney was lending himself, heart and soul, to beat back British oppression from these shores, his kinsman, George Brydges Rodney, Baron and Admiral Rodney, was a distinguished officer in the British navy, and in 1781 encountered and wholly defeated the French fleet under Count de Grasse in the West Indies.

It is also a fact, not without interest to Delaware, that the father of the pious, venerated late Bishop Lee of this State, was a midshipman in the British navy, and engaged in the battle referred to.

The name George Brydges Rodney descended lineally to our late venerable fellow citizen in New Castle, a descendant in the same degree as Cæsar Rodney, from William, the first comer.

On August 25, 1777, when Sir William Howe made his landing at the head of the Elk river, General Rodney was ordered by Washington, who had his headquarters then at Wilmington, to gather his Delaware troops in close proximity to the enemy, to hang upon his flank, observe and report his movements, harrass his outposts, and protect the surrounding country from marauding parties.

By order of General Rodney General Maxwell and a body of horse were posted at Cooch's mill, near the foot of Iron Hill, and another body of horse was posted at Aitkens' tavern to reconnoitre.

After an interview with General Washington at Wilmington Rodney was ordered to return to Middletown and await the arrival of a battalion of Maryland troops under Colonel Richardson.

This comprehensive and dangerous service Rodney proceeded to execute with his accustomed vigor, passing personally from point to point within his field of duty.

From the unpublished papers on file in the Department of State at Washington, I have been able to procure copies of three of Rodney's letters written at the time to General Washington, which will graphically convey to you the activity of the service of Rodney and the Delaware militia, and indicate his relations to his Commander-in-Chief at a critical period.

[CÆSAR RODNEY TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.]

NOXONTON, Sept. 4th, 1777.

DEAR GENERAL:—I took post in this place on Tuesday about 10 o'clock, being the most secure considering my forces not being joined as yet by more than forty or fifty of the New Castle militia, I have some more than four hundred all but those few above mentioned from Kent, I have have kept out scouting parties rather more than equal to the force I now have, and my light horse are every day within view of the enemy. The night before last they exchanged shot with and alarmed their camp at Canon tavern, and last night did the same at Aitkens' tavern. I have now two scouting parties of foot out, one of 20 and another of 50, the light horse just going out again. I intend, in order be the more convenient for this business, to move to Middletown to-morrow, and am in great hopes shall be joined in a few days by the militia from Maryland and this State, having advised Col. Gist of your instructions and my situation for that purpose. I am afraid the New Castle militia are so intercepted as not to have it in their power to get to me. Your deserters and our prisoners have been into me, these, considering the difficulty of sending to Wilmington, I have took out and given orders for safe keeping, indeed I have two of them at work repairing our arms in that county. From these deserters, from the view my parties have had of the enemy, and from some landholders of this neighborhood who

had been surprised into their camp and last night released, they seem determined to push immediately for Phila. Some of those last mentioned say the officers, upon being told that you had thirty thousand men under your command and could have as many militia more as you would be pleased to ask, said they wished most sincerely you had 100,000. I wish, hope, and verily believe, you have enough to frustrate the villianous attempts of those eninies of mankind who are a pest to good society.

I am, dear sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

CÆSAR RODNEY.

P. S.—One of my scouting parties came in this minute and the officer reports the enemy were striking their tents at Aitkens' tavern and preparing to march toward Christiana bridge at 7 o'clock this morning.

C. R.

[CÆSAR RODNEY TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.]

MIDDLETOWN, September 6th, 1777.

DEAR GENERAL:—Immediately on the receival of your letter of yesterday I dispatched one of my light horse with yours to Col. Richardson, who he fortunately found at the head of Sassafra. By the same hand I wrote to Col. Gist to obtain and give me the best information of the movements of the enemy's fleet, and have inclosed you his letter to me ~~or~~ on that head. He mentions the rising and imboding of some tories, and refers to another letter sent herewith as to those mentioned to be in Kent on Delaware. I am apprehensive it must be without foundation, because I have very good intelligence from that quarter every day, and have heard nothing of it. When I arrived here yesterday was informed by a number of people that four hundred of the enemy had landed that morning at Town Point, the farthest point of land between Elk and Boheamy, I immediately sent a party off that way. The officer has returned and reports that he was down on the point and all through that neck, and that there were none of the enemy to be seen. I have a party of foot just setting out to take a view of the enemy about Aitkens'



tavern, where I am informed they still lie. I had forgot to tell you that the officer of the horse informed me he took a view of the Elk river, and that he saw but three or four vessels, small vessels of war. Before I left Wilmington I drew five boxes of cartridges; could not then obtain a wagon to bring them. The President promised to have them sent immediately; however, by some means or other, they are not come; for want of them I am much distressed, not having more than four rounds. I think the New Castle militia now may, and hope they will join me.

Sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

CÆSAR RODNEY.

P. S.—A person just come from Kent on Delaware, says there is a report there that a number of tories on the borders of that county and Maryland have embodied, that some of them are taken, and that it is believed they were encouraged to it by the Methodists, many of whose preachers are in that quarter.

[CÆSAR RODNEY TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.]

NOXONTON, September 9th, 1777.

I am here in a disagreeable situation, unable to render you and the States those services I both wished and expected. A few days ago I moved from this to Middletown in order to induce the New Castle militia in this quarter, who had shown great backwardness, to turn out, especially as by that move most of their farms and property were covered. However, all this has answered no purpose, for, though I believe most of their officers have been vigilant, but very few have come in at all, and those few who made their appearance in the morning took the liberty of returning, contrary to their orders, in the evening. Their increasing the duty and setting so bad an example to the troops from Kent, about four hundred in number and the only troops I had with me, brought about so general discontent and uneasiness, especially as they were more immediately defending the property of those people, as caused them in great numbers to leave me; though

I must say the officers did all they could to prevent it. Finding this the case, paid Colonel Gist a visit myself to know his situation and when it might be possible for him to move forward with Colonel Richardson's battalion and the militia of the Maryland eastern shore, who let me know he was doing all he could to collect them and would move forward as soon as he should have it in his power. The two upper battalions of New Castle county have never even assigned a reason why they have not joined me. Under these circumstances I removed to Noxon Town, where the camp duty on the few I have with me is less severe, until the other troops mentioned shall be ready to move forward, and have wrote this day to Colonel Gist on that head. Yesterday evening I sent a party of my light horse to take a view of the enemy and gain intelligence. The officer with his men returned this morning and reports that he was in Aitkens' tavern house, past some miles through the late encampment of the enemy round about that place, saw and was among the fires they had left burning; that the extreme part of their right wing was at Cooche's mill, their left toward Newark. This intelligence makes me more anxious to collect and move forward such a body as would be able to render you signal service by falling upon and harrassing their right wing or rear. Be assured all I can do shall be done. But he that can deal with militia may almost venture to deal with the —. As soon as I can set forward shall advise you. God send you a complete victory. I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

CÆSAR RODNEY.

Two days after the date of this last letter the battle of Brandywine was fought with serious disaster and loss to the American army.

The battle of Germantown followed on October 4th, and just before that time Rodney strongly urged the importance of the occupation of Wilmington and capture of the small British force in possession of the town, to induce a diversion of the enemy.

Friction or jealousy, however, between the officer in command of the local detachment of "regular" forces of our army and the militia under Rodney, defeated his plan, which was formed with a view to restore confidence among the inhabitants after the reverse at Brandywine.

On the 31st of March, 1778, General Rodney was elected president of the Delaware State for the term of three years, and as his letter of acceptance is so characteristic, I have copied it from the record.

WEDNESDAY A. M., April 1st, 1778.

*Gentlemen of the General Assembly:*

I received yesterday afternoon your message declaring me duly elected President of the Delaware State, and am fully sensible of the honor done me by the appointment ; but as I am too conscious of my own inability to suppose your expectation will be answered by my acceptance, I hope I shall be excused. I think, nevertheless, that at a time like this, it is the duty of every member of society to take such part in the civil line as shall be assigned him by the government, if tolerably qualified ; therefore if the General Assembly cannot fix upon some other person more equal to that important duty, I shall, though with the greatest diffidence, accept ; in full confidence, however, that your honors will afford me every necessary aid in the due execution of the laws, and otherwise supporting the civil government as now established under the authority of the people ; and as the provision made for the president is by no means an ample one ; that the General Assembly would not wish to add to the sacrifice I have already made, by which more than ought to fall to the share of any one member of the community.

CÆSAR RODNEY.

Dover, April 1st, 1778.

His gubernatorial messages to the Legislature abundantly attest his unremitting activity in the cause of independence, and his correspondence with parties outside the State will show how important was the aid he rendered.

From the unpublished files of the Department of State I have copies of sundry letters from President Rodney during this period of office, addressed to General Washington and to the committee of co-operation, which may form an appendix to these remarks.

Two original letters have also been placed in my hands by Mr. John M. C. Rodney, one of Sept. 19, 1779, to Col. Craighead, and another of May 6, 1780, unaddressed, and I do not feel at liberty to withhold from you the contents of both, for Cæsar Rodney's own words, like his own deeds, tell best what manner of man he was.

DOVER, Sept. the 19th, 1779.

SIR:—About seven or eight days ago I wrote you on the subject of providing in time for the Delaware Regiment, and then inclosed you copies of letters from the Board of War, Clothier General and on that head. I now beg leave inclose you a copy of a late resolution of Congress I am just now furnished with, to the same purpose, and must beg leave, tho' perhaps unnecessary, to urge your immediate attention to this business that you do not neglect, as soon as possible, to lay a full state of it before the Board of War, and the Clothier General, and that you also furnish me with another, in order that I may be enabled to lay the same before the General Assembly at their next meeting, and urge their making ample provision for carrying the requisition of Congress into execution in future.

I am, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,  
CÆSAR RODNEY.

Col. G. Craighead.

DOVER, May the 6th, 1780.

SIR:—I received a letter of the 24th ult. from the Baron de Kalb, a Major-General in our army, requesting an immediate supply of cash for the officers of the Delaware Regiment now moving to the southward, to be advanced them by this State in consequence of a resolution of Congress, to make good to the army the depreciation of the paper currency, as

it is highly probable the General will not join the troops before their embarkation at the head of Elk. I must beg leave to give the officers, thro' you, such answer as I should have given him. There is little doubt but the officers' wishes and perhaps their expectations are equal to their wants, if so, their disappointment must be great. I am well acquainted both with their wants and their worth, it is therefore with great concern I told you that no such resolution as above written has been communicated to me by Congress, and that there are no monies granted by the General Assembly of this State subject to my order, in favour of any person, save the State Clothier. Whenever I have it in my power, be assured I shall not want an inclination to serve the Delaware officers.

I am obediently,

C. RODNEY.

Cæsar Rodney was a moral force, and his spirit infused itself throughout the community in which he lived.

No accurate census of the population of the union was attempted until 1790, and the estimates prior to that date differ widely. In April 1783, in the diary of James Madison of the debates of the Congress of the confederation, a report of the grand committee is published, wherein the table of the population of the several States is given "upon the best information they could obtain;" four only of the States producing what they termed "authentic documents of the number." By this the total number of the inhabitants in the thirteen States was 2,359,300; Virginia being foremost in population, Massachusetts second, Pennsylvania third, and New York having fewer than Connecticut.

Delaware, the least of all, had but 35,000 souls, and of these 35,000 at least 2000 were negro slaves, leaving 33,000 white people of all ages. Assuming a numerical equality of the sexes, there were 16,500 males. By the present rule of draft and conscription, all males (not disabled) between the ages of eighteen and forty-four are considered as available for military service. This ratio by the census of 1880 was a fraction over twenty per cent. or one-fifth of the male population.

By the Delaware regulation in 1776 the age of military service was from sixteen years to fifty. If the *total* force, making no allowance for invalids under this *last* estimate, had been called out in 1783, Delaware would have contributed 2125 men, or under the present rule as to military age 1700 men.

There is, however, no authenticated and complete roster of the Continental armies of the revolutionary period.

In this State I know of no one with better faculty or more honest intent for an accurate ascertainment of the number of men who marched from Delaware to fight the battles of American independence, than the late Judge William G. Whiteley.

In a carefully prepared address at the centennial celebration in 1876, in Philadelphia, Judge Whiteley stated the number of men contributed by Delaware to the Continental army to have been 4728, exclusive of militia battalions and companies raised for home protection.

During the late war, to prevent secession, the vigorous epigram was attributed to General Grant that the government of the late Confederacy had "robbed the cradle and the grave" to fill their armies.

But it is submitted to you, the descendants of the "Delaware men of '76," can any record of military contribution surpass that of our forefathers?

And such troops were they! There is scarcely a battlefield all the way from Long Island to Camden in South Carolina, and back again to Yorktown, in which the bones of Delaware soldiers do not moulder. The testimony from all quarters of their courage and devotion is not a current—it is a torrent!

Shall we call a few of the cloud of witnesses? Let Washington, Green, DeKalb, answer. Let the report of every battle in which they were engaged speak for them. Few of these brave men survived the war; as usual, the most daring fell—and in the reaction of distress and poverty that succeeded the struggle, those who did survive returned to the

labor of supporting their families, often crippled with wounds or disabled by disease contracted in the campaigns through which they had passed.

Washington once bitterly described Conway, saying "that it was a maxim with him to leave no service of his own untold, nor to want anything that could be obtained by importunity."

To describe the troops from Delaware his language would have been entirely reversed, for not they—nor, alas! any one as yet for them—has told the true story of their services, and they never importuned, even for simple justice, the government they had served.

Colonel Thomas Rodney, brother of Cæsar, himself a brave and good soldier, was captain of the company of Dover Light Infantry, at whose head he marched to join Washington's army before the battle of Trenton, and subsequently was engaged, together with the Delaware troops, at the battles of Princetown and Monmouth.

This Dover company, because of their excellence in discipline and equipment, were detailed for duty as General Washington's headquarters guard, and in the MSS. of Thomas Rodney I find the following reference to the Delaware Regiment :—

"The first Delaware Regiment when reviewed by Congress, at Philadelphia, was acknowledged to be the stoutest and best looking, as well as the best disciplined of any in the army, their conduct on Long Island in the first action against Howe, obtained them the first character; they were the last that maintained their ground against the enemy, and when they could stand no longer, being surrounded by far superior numbers, every other part of the field being lost, they fought their way, made a good retreat and brought off several prisoners. The chief honor of the day on this occasion was ascribed by the regiment to the spirited conduct of Captain Jonathan Caldwell of Kent; for the Colonel was absent and the Lieutenant-Colonel and Major were men of no previous

experience, so that by consent, as it were, Captain Caldwell, who had been an officer in the late war, and was a man of daring and undaunted spirit, was admitted chiefly to direct the regiment.

"The Col. Hazlett, being afterwards killed at Princetown, and the Lt.-Colonel and Major leading, resigned, the command of the regiment next year was offered to Captain Caldwell, but President McKinley having offended him in the manner of doing this, he refused it and left the regiment and retired.

"The command of the regiment then devolved on Col. David Hall, and such continued to be the spirited conduct of of the officers and men that they preserved their distinguished and superior character throughout the war. Adams, Stevens, and Holland, all brave officers, as well as the Col. Hazlett, at different times fell in the field of battle. Hall, Pope, Kirkwood, Patten, Sanghan, McKennan, Jaquett, Wilson, Learmotte, Cox, and in short almost every officer in the regiment, signalized and distinguished themselves in the course of the war. And such was their reputation that General Sullivan (who had often had the regiment under his command) declared in Congress in the year 1781 that they were far superior to any other corps in the army. And in fact they became as much distinguished as the tenth legion was among the Romans."

The surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in October 1781, ended the last important battle of the Americans for independence.

The vigor of Rodney and his State did not abate, and on the 19th of June, 1782, I find among resolutions passed by the General Assembly unanimously, one to the effect:—

"That the whole power of this State shall be exerted for enabling Congress to carry on the war until a peace consistent with our federal union and national faith can be obtained."



Six months afterwards such a peace was obtained, and the provisional articles concluded in November 1782 were proclaimed by Congress in April 1783. The armistice declaring a cessation of hostilities was signed at Paris in January 1783, and on the 3d of September of that year the definitive treaty of peace was signed, in the first article of which his Britannic majesty acknowledged the thirteen States severally by name and as United States to be free, independent and sovereign States, and relinquished all claims to the government, proprietary and territorial rights thereof.

John Dickenson had succeeded Mr. Rodney as President of the State, and was in that office when the preliminary articles were agreed to, but it remained for Nicholas Vandyke, as President, to announce formally to the General Assembly, on June 5, 1783, the entrance of the United States to "an equal station among the nations of the earth."

In October 1783 Mr. Rodney, together with John Banning and Richard Bassett, was elected to represent the county of Kent in the Legislative Council, and by it unanimously chosen speaker.

On April 8, 1784, the minutes recite that the council met at the house of the Hon. Cæsar Rodney, Esq., the speaker, he being too much indisposed to attend the usual place of meeting. On that day he signed a message to the House of Assembly, as speaker of the council, and this was his last recorded service.

The adjournment was to May 24th, when he was too ill to attend, and in a few weeks the cruel malady by which he had been so long afflicted ended his mortal life.

Cæsar Rodney never married, and the happiness of conjugal life, which he was so fitted by his amiable disposition to enjoy, was denied him. There are certain confidences so purely personal that the right to have them maintained survives.

Mr. Rodney was too warm-hearted a man not to have cherished an attachment warmer and stronger than friend-

ship. Among his papers proofs of such a dedication of his love and devotion have been found, but it was not his happy fate to form the union which his heart desired.

It was said of Washington that God gave him no children in order that a nation might call him father; and may it not be said of Cæsar Rodney that, although denied children he has to-day, in the young men of his native State, children of his example and character who cherish his memory with affection and gratitude?

Mr. Rodney's will is dated January 20, 1784, with a codicil of March 27, 1784, and the signature of the testator to the latter was affixed by Edward Tilghman, Jr., in the presence of the testator and by his express direction.

This inability to write indicates his extreme debility.

His will was admitted to probate on July 3, 1784, the anniversary of his memorable ride to Philadelphia, eight years before.

The instrument is unusually formal and verbose, covering twenty pages, with a codicil occupying three more. It recites all his civil and military dignities, among them that of signer of the Declaration of Independence, and, with the natural pride of a man well born, gives his line of descent from the first settlement of his ancestors in America.

The will testifies the benevolent nature of the man, giving legacies for charity and gratification, and carefully providing for the gradual manumission of his negro servants.

His chief solicitude was for his nephew, Cæsar Augustus Rodney, and as to him his devise was most careful:—

“And it is my will and I do order that my brother, Thomas Rodney, have the management and direction of the lands, tenements and hereditaments and real estate herein before devised to his son, Cæsar Augustus Rodney, and that during the minority of the said Cæsar, or until the said Cæsar die in his minority, and I do empower the said Thomas Rodney during the said time to farm, lease or let

to rent the same to the best advantage and take and receive the rents, issues and profits thereof upon the special trust and confidence that he apply the whole of the said rents, issues and profits in the improvement of the said estate and the education of the said Cæsar Augustus Rodney, paying, nevertheless thereout, the legacy herein before bequeathed to Christ's Church, in Dover (and that in three years at most after my decease), without interest, and reserving thereout a sufficient sum to purchase for the said Cæsar against the time he arrives at the age of twenty-one years, a good and complete law library. And it is my most particular wish and desire that my brother, Thomas Rodney, and those hereafter mentioned to succeed him in the power hereby given respecting the said estate, cause the said Cæsar Augustus Rodney to be brought up in the religion commonly called the Church of England, and be educated as liberally in classical learning, natural and moral philosophy and every other branch of literature that has a tendency to improve the understanding and polish the manners as reasonably as may be in America."

But, alas for human foresight! all of his discreet plans to protect his executors from embarrassment and secure the estate to his nephew were destined to defeat.

The consequences of a protracted and exhausting war, after so severe a strain upon the resources of the people, led to great public and private distress.

The sale of Mr. Rodney's landed estate was forced by his creditors for the payment of debts, and grossly sacrificed.

The curse was added of a depreciated paper money system, that blood poison of the body politic, which inflicted more injury and caused more distress and demoralization than the eight years of war.

A pleasing description of Mr. Rodney's personal appearance was given by his brother Thomas, from whose MSS. I here transcribe it :—

“Cæsar Rodney was about five feet ten inches high ; his person was very elegant and genteel ; his manners graceful, easy and polite. He had a good fund of humor, and the happiest talent in the world of making his wit agreeable, however sparkling and severe. He was a great statesman, a faithful public officer, just in all his dealings, easy to his family and debtors, sincere to his friends, beneficent to his relatives, and kind to his servants, and always lived in a generous and social style.”

And now before I bring to a close a prolix and what I fear has been to you a tedious attempt to describe the life and services of Cæsar Rodney, I have a duty to perform which gives me especial joy and pride.

Since my arrival to-day in Dover, a document has been placed in my hands which may well be considered the jewel in Delaware's historical crown.

The parchment I now hold up before you is the original ratification of the constitution of the United States, by the Deputies of the State of Delaware in convention on the seventh day of December, seventeen hundred and eighty-seven, signed by all the delegates.

The words of this document and the names of its signers should indeed become “household words” in every home in the State ; our children and our children's children should be taught what it means and all that it meant at that time.

To know what the prompt, unanimous ratification of Delaware carried with it, we must recall the perilous uncertainty between anarchy and settled government in which the fate of our country then hung. Washington wrote : “The constitution or disunion are before us to choose from.” And again he wrote : “The political concerns of the country are suspended by a single thread.”

Early in December, just as Delaware was about to give her decision, Monroe wrote to Madison : “The cloud which hath hung over us for some time is not likely soon to be dispelled.”

